United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council urges parties in Cyprus to conclude agreement on confidence-building measures for Varosha and Nicosia Airport without delay; Secretary-General to report on progress by end of month.

+ Secretary-General to leave New York tomorrow for official visits to Argentina and Chile.

+ Member States owe United Nations $2.5 billion as of 28 February; $1.3 billion owed to regular budget and $1.2 billion to peace-keeping.

+ Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend UNAVEM II mandate for three months to aid Angolan peace process; seeks increase, in principle, in authorized strength to help implement final settlement.

+ Women in occupied territories face gender discrimination, as well as Israeli oppression, observer for Palestine tells Commission on Status of Women; speakers also highlight obstacles to advancement in economies in transition.

+ United Nations Conference on Fish Stocks to meet at Headquarters from 14 to 31 March, with focus on conservation and management.

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The Security Council today stressed the need for the two parties in Cyprus to conclude an agreement on implementation of confidence-building measures for Varosha and Nicosia International Airport without delay. Reiterating that the status quo was unacceptable, the Council welcomed the parties' acceptance in principle of the measures, and the fact that intensive discussions had allowed the Secretary-General's representatives to bring forward ideas facilitating an agreement. It took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 902 (1994).

The Council reaffirmed that the confidence-building measures, while not an end in themselves, or a substitute for the wider political process, would offer significant benefits to both communities and would facilitate the

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political process towards an overall settlement. It asked the Secretary-General to report by the end of this month on the outcome of his efforts to finalise an agreement.

In a report on his mission of good offices in Cyprus dated 4 March, the Secretary-General said an agreement on the confidence-building measures would be the most important development on the island in two decades. It would produce important economic gains for both sides and promote the kind of relationship that should exist in a federation.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will leave New York tomorrow to pay official visits to Argentina and Chile, at the invitation of their respective Governments, a United Nations spokesman announced today. He will be in Argentina during the first half of next week and in Chile during the second.

While in Chile, the Secretary-General will visit the Santiago-based Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the spokesman said. He noted that the Secretary-General had been making an effort to visit each of the Economic Commissions and to meet with their staffs.

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As of 28 February, the United Nations was owed a total of $2.5 billion by Member States, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $1.3 billion was for assessments for the regular budget and $1.2 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed almost $300 million to the regular budget, and more than $180 million to the peace-keeping budget, for the current year; it owed more than $230 million and $100 million respectively for prior years. Japan, Germany, the Russian Federation, France, the United Kingdom and Italy all had regular budget contributions outstanding for the current year, but not for previous years. However, the Russian Federation owed a total of $490 million in peace-keeping contributions.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the Security Council extend the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II), at its current strength, for another three months. In a report dated 9 March, he said the Mission was essential to ongoing efforts to achieve a comprehensive political settlement in Angola and to the humanitarian relief programme there.

The Secretary-General said that as soon as a peace agreement had been reached, he would send a technical mission to Angola and make recommendations for a new, enlarged United Nations mandate there. Experience had shown that it would take three to five months to deploy a full-fledged peace-keeping

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mission, and the Organization should therefore be ready to immediately deploy military and police observers in sensitive regions. He warned that failure to respond to developments could jeopardize a settlement at the most critical stages. In order to guarantee a timely response, the Council should authorize, in principle, an increase in UNAVEM II's strength to its previous level of 350 military observers, 126 police observers, 14 military medical staff, and an appropriate number of civilian staff. The extra personnel would only be deployed when a settlement had been reached or was imminent.

The Secretary-General called attention to the Mission's "very critical" financial situation, noting that outstanding assessed contributions exceeded $27 million. He also appealed to the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to guarantee the safety of relief workers and not to disrupt the provision of humanitarian aid.

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Women in the occupied territories face the gender discrimination of a patriarchal society, in addition to Israeli oppression, the observer for Palestine told the Commission on the Status of Women today. The killing, imprisonment or deportation of their men meant that Palestinian women in the occupied territories headed 35 per cent of the households, he said. The Commission was concluding its general discussion on United Nations programming and coordination and on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

The representative of Pakistan expressed hope that changes in South Africa and the Israeli-occupied territories would help improve the conditions of women there. He also commended the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) for appointing women as one third of its candidates for next April's Constituent Assembly elections. The representatives of the Russian Federation and the Slovak Republic said that the transition to a market economy had particularly hurt women. New employment opportunities were being opened to women, but the current economic situation in Central and Eastern Europe restricted their access to financial and other resources.

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The United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks will hold its second substantive session at Headquarters from 14 to 31 March. The Conference has a mandate from the General Assembly to solve long-standing problems of high seas fisheries, particularly regarding the conservation and management of fish stocks.

The Conference also has a mandate from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to improve cooperation between States in the management of fisheries and to make recommendations on sustainable use and conservation. Its work must be consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, particularly regarding the rights and obligations of coastal States and States fishing on the high seas.

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Participants will have before them a text summarizing the views expressed by delegations at the first substantive session last July. The text is not a negotiated document and does not reflect a consensus, but is meant to guide the next round of discussion.

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